

CAROLINA EXTERIOR: MAUDEL STEEL'S MAGIC GARDEN

gold flowers,
zinnias, yellow
roses, marigolds

explosions of guava
pale lemon,
mango, melon

her blue sky dress
shimmers apricot
and honey

gold on the
barn wood zinnias
zinnias gold

gold, gold

PORCHES

in Bean Blossom
or Jefferson City, a
maiden aunt in her
'80s in a cane
rocker sipping elder
berry wine, a calico cat
curled near her.
Across the street, a
ten-year-old sorts base
ball cards on the
slanty slat-board floor,
calls his kid sister
names. An overhead
fan cuts the heavy
July air over the
creak of a wood swing.
Rosewin, a 16-year-
old girl in a halter
top flirts with the
neighbor boy as the dark
folds in on itself.
Fireflies in hemlock.
Citronella candles,
moths at the screen,
in the wet grass.
The night train
so Erie Lackawanna

THE MAN WITH NO SPINE

They didn't want us
to get married,
said we were too
young but both of
our mothers were
16. I walk on
my hands. If I'm
going long distance,
I'll take my skate
board. We don't
want children but
we could have
them, if you know
what I mean. People
stare, yeah, esp
in grocery stores
and giggle. She
gives them the
finger. Would I
try a prosthesis?
I did. Cut it up
and burned it.
Do you know what
it feels like
being a statue
standing still?

PAULETTE, LIVING IN HER CAR

I was a ballet dancer,
then I got divorced.
I tried to be a
secretary but
learned that tho
I'm healthy
I couldn't get
any job. I fill
my car with things
that don't let
you know there's
a person in there,
a lot of bags and boxes
and I cover myself
with newspaper
and hunker down